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THE PHILADELPHIA NOMINATING SYSTEM.

During the last few years Philadelphia has offered a particularly good opportunity for a study of the influences which control party nominations. In consequence of recent developments in national politics, the local Democratic party has suffered an almost total collapse. It has ceased to make a serious contest at city elections, which have accordingly become empty forms; the Republican candidates being uniformly elected by overwhelming majorities. Relieved, in this way, of all fear of defeat at the polls—the chief incentive to party harmony—Republican leaders have engaged in a series of struggles for supremacy which have aroused an unprecedented interest in the primary elections. On several occasions within the last four years practically the whole body of Republican voters seems to have taken part in the primaries. At the primary election held January 11, 1898, about 140,000 votes were cast—a larger number than any Republican candidate, except President McKinley, has ever received at the regular election.*

The large vote cast at these primaries, subjected the Republican nominating system to a crucial test. If at all suited to its function, it should, under such circumstances, have reflected the sentiment of the rank and file of the party. And yet the “political machine” which has long dominated the politics of Philadelphia had no difficulty in maintaining its ascendancy. It demonstrated its ability to control the result of a primary participated in by the mass of voters almost as easily as one attended only by its own henchmen. What is the secret of its power? To answer this question it will be necessary to study the practical operation of the nominating system.

*In 626 out of 981 divisions, 93,457 votes were returned. The same divisions gave McKinley 118,378. For the other 355 divisions no returns are obtainable.

The movement toward the subjection of nominating systems to legal control, which has been a marked feature of recent legislation in many states of the Union* has made but little progress in Pennsylvania. As in other states which have adopted the Australian ballot system, political parties are allowed to certify nominations, *i. e.*, to place tickets on the official ballot without filing petitions. To avail itself of this privilege, a party organization is required to conduct its primary elections and conventions according to definite rules. The ballot act reads: "Any convention of delegates or primary meeting *held under the rules of a political party . . .* may . . . nominate by causing a certificate of nomination to be filed as hereinafter provided."† As to the provisions of the rules, there is but one legal requirement. In consequence of an act of June 29, 1881,‡ primary election officers must take an oath to perform their duties faithfully. In all other respects, the rules may be of any character the party chooses to adopt; and once adopted, they have the force of law.§

The Republican rules|| provide for (1) a party organization and (2) a nominating system. The party organization includes bodies representing (1) the electoral division, (2) the ward, and (3) the city at large. The division associations which are annually organized in each of the 996 divisions are designed to be popular assemblies of the resident Republican voters. At the winter primary the Republicans of each division elect two members to the ward executive

* *Vide*, "Tendencies in Primary Legislation." ANNALS, May, 1899.

† Act of June 10, 1893, section 2, P. L. 419.

‡ P. L. 128.

§ In the following cases, party rules have been enforced by the courts: "Donahue's Nomination," Penna. Dist. Reports, 1893, p. 5; "Ker's Nomination," *Ibid.*, 1893, p. 14; "Savage's Nomination," "Caldwell's Nomination," *Ibid.*, 1894, p. 705; "Laubach's and Hessler's Nomination," *Ibid.*, 1896, p. 662; "Stucker's Nomination," *Ibid.*, 1896, p. 660; "Klugh's Nomination," *Ibid.*, 1896, p. 661; "Nominations of Shoemaker and Coleman," *Ibid.*, 1897, p. 670; "Huey's Objections," *Ibid.*, 1897, p. 113.

|| "Rules of the Union Republican Party of Philadelphia;" published by the City Campaign Committee, 1330 Chestnut Street.

committee, and at its first meeting each of the forty ward executive committees elects a member to the city committee. The functions of these bodies, in so far as they relate to the matter in hand, will be explained in the course of our examination of the nominating system.

The candidates for all offices, except those of judge, inspector and assessor of elections, are nominated by conventions, a separate convention being held for each office to be filled.* In every convention each electoral division within the district is represented by a delegate chosen at the primary election.

The mechanism of the primary is the same as that of regular elections before the adoption of the official ballot. This appears in the composition of the primary election boards, which, like the regular election boards, consist of a judge and two inspectors, so elected as to insure one inspector to the minority. As a further analogy to the electoral system, a division registry of Republican voters is provided for. The president and secretary of the division association, with three other persons chosen expressly for the purpose, are constituted a "board of registering officers," whose duty it is to prepare an alphabetical list of all residents of the division who voted the Republican ticket at the last national or state election. In practice these boards, which receive no compensation for their services, seldom take the trouble to perform their duties. As a rule, no party registry is prepared; the "assessor's registry," which contains the names of all qualified electors of the division, being commonly used in its place as a check-list at the primary. Therefore, in distinguishing Republicans from the members of other parties, the election officers are dependent mainly upon their own acquaintance and the vigilance of the "workers," who, whenever more than one ticket is in the field, challenge every voter whose right is not conceded.

* There is a slight exception to this rule; candidates for Select and Common Councils being nominated by the same conventions.

The challenged voter must swear or affirm that he is a *bona fide* resident of the division, as well as a qualified Republican voter according to the party rules, and also "produce two well-known Republicans of the division who will swear that to the best of their knowledge and belief" his statements are correct.

Except in divisions where general elections are held in "movable booths" (in which case the ward executive committee selects a place), the primaries are held at the regular polling places. The polls are open between the hours of 6 and 8 p. m. After promising under oath or affirmation to conduct the election faithfully and impartially, according to the laws of the state and the rules of the party, the election officers usually take seats around a table placed by a window that faces the street. In front of the window a crowd collects, large or small according to the popular interest aroused by the primary election. The name of the first voter who presents his ballot at the window is checked on the registry, and then written at the top of a sheet of paper and marked "1," after which his ballot, similarly marked, is placed in the ballot box, usually a cigar box with a slot in the lid. As each succeeding vote is cast the same process is repeated, the voters' names being numbered consecutively and each man's number written on his ballot.

When the polls close at eight o'clock, the candidates are allowed to enter the room to watch the counting of the votes. The ballots, being emptied on the table, are first counted in mass to see that the number agrees with that of the names on the poll list. They are then examined and the "straight tickets" picked out and classified, all that contain the same names throughout being placed in the same pile; after which the "straight tickets" are counted and the votes credited to the candidates. Next, one of the officers takes up the "scratched tickets" and reads aloud the names of the persons voted for on each, while his colleagues record the result. All the votes having been credited, the total

number received by each candidate is computed and the result of the primary announced.

The certificates of election are then prepared on blank forms supplied by the city committee, and delivered to the successful candidates. The delegates-elect, taking their credentials, go at once to the ward headquarters, where, an hour or two later, the delegation elected by the several divisions of the ward to each convention, in which at least three wards are to be represented, will hold a meeting to choose a delegation chairman. The chairmen of ward delegations, in addition to acting as spokesmen for their colleagues, are entrusted with the more important duty of selecting the temporary officers of the convention, for which purpose they hold a meeting at half-past nine the following morning. The conventions (except those held to nominate candidates for school directors, which are held at eight o'clock the same evening) assemble a half hour later.

In the nomination of candidates a majority of all the delegates elected to the convention is required; and, to prevent a dead-lock, the rules provide that all candidates receiving less than three votes on the third ballot, and the candidate receiving the fewest votes on each subsequent ballot, must be dropped and not again voted for.

Such, in outline, is the nominating system under which the Republicans of Philadelphia, while ostensibly choosing party candidates, really elect public officials. The theory usually advanced to account for the ability of the "machine" to control the result of a well attended primary rests on the assumption that the popular verdict is set aside by fraud. Without doubt there are patent facts which, upon a superficial view, point to this conclusion. As a result of the absence of impartial management and control, the primaries are frequently conducted in a loose and irregular manner; and this, by rendering it difficult to ascertain which candidate receives the greatest number of legal votes, in divisions where the contending factions are of approx-

imately equal strength, leads to an excessive number of contests; for the settlement of which the party rules fail to provide an impartial tribunal.

An unsuccessful candidate who desires to contest the election of his rival, is directed by the rules to hand to the president of the division association a statement of his case signed by himself and two other Republicans of the division. The president must summon the secretary and the three registering officers, who, with himself, constitute a board to try contests. Having sworn to award the certificate to the person who has received the greatest number of legal votes, they must give a hearing to each side, and, if the contest is for a seat in a convention, decide the case before adjournment.

The action of these boards is characterized by incompetence and venality. In practice, they create rather than decide contests; and within recent years, the function which they nominally perform has, in point of fact, been usurped by the leaders of the "machine." To illustrate, suppose a candidate, belonging to an opposing faction, receives a majority at the primary; the election officers, mindful of the wholesome provisions of the act of June 29, 1881, will usually give him the certificate of election to which he is entitled. But as no penalty hangs over the members of the contest board, they can commit fraud with impunity. If the defeated candidate is not averse to stealing a seat, and they are willing to co-operate, they grant him a certificate under color of their authority to decide contests. The person who was really elected is, perhaps, never informed that his seat is contested; and, in any case, he will naturally decline to abide by the decision of a corrupt tribunal. Thus, when the convention assembles on the following day, two delegates, each having apparently a valid certificate, claim the same seat; and the question arises: Which shall be seated?

The authority to admit delegates to the hall and exclude persons not entitled to admission, has naturally fallen to the

city and ward committees, they being directed by the rules to provide meeting places for the conventions. Theoretically, this function did not at first require the exercise of discretion. Under the rules, a certificate signed by the primary election officers, or, in case of a contest, by the members of the contest board, conferred upon the holder an unconditional right to enter the hall and participate in the proceedings of the convention. Inasmuch as the certificate of contest takes precedence of the certificate of election, it should be accepted when both are presented. However, the notorious partiality of the contest boards has rendered a strict observance of the rule impracticable. It could hardly be expected for example that the committee in charge of a convention hall would permit its own friends to be defeated by the admission of delegates who had received certificates from corrupt contest boards. Accordingly, the city committee and the ward committees have assumed the right to issue tickets of admission to the delegates whom they choose to consider properly elected; which function, after having been exercised without authority for several years, was legalized by a recent amendment to the rules.*

This practice, though apparently begun in good faith, has opened the way for flagrant abuses. It has enabled the faction in control of the party organization to make up the roll of a convention in an arbitrary manner, giving itself a majority even when defeated at the primaries. In case of the city and larger district conventions, the same methods may be used in the preliminary struggle over the temporary organization. The meeting of ward delegation chairmen, at which the temporary officers are chosen, is usually held in the convention hall, under the auspices of the city committee; which is therefore able, by deciding contests between rival chairmen, to organize the convention in the interest of its friends.

To what extent the city and ward committees have used

* Adopted May 4, 1898.

such powers corruptly it is impossible to say; the real facts being rarely obtainable. But in the bitterness of the struggle which frequently attends the selection of temporary officers, whose co-operation is, of course, essential to the success of such high-handed proceedings, we find a virtual confession that the admission and recognition of delegates is governed largely by factional considerations. It is generally taken for granted by the public that the faction which wins the temporary organization, will admit its own adherents to contested seats, and thus nominate its candidates.

But while there is abundant evidence that gross fraud of this nature is occasionally perpetrated, it offers a very inadequate explanation of the success of the "machine"—and this for two reasons. First, the cases in which such methods are resorted to are invariably contests between rival factions of professional politicians. Movements originating with other classes are usually so feeble as to be defeated with ease by legitimate methods. Again, even in contests between rival leaders of the "machine," the exclusion of enough fairly elected delegates to convert a minority into a majority, seems to have occurred but rarely in ward and district, and never in city conventions.

In but one instance (the tax receiver's convention, held January 12, 1898) has the city committee been seriously accused of changing the result of a city convention by such means. The primaries at which delegates to this convention were elected, had been the scene of a determined struggle between the "administration faction," which controlled the city committee, and a group of "ward bosses," styling themselves "The Leaders' League." On the following morning it appeared that, of the thirty-eight ward delegations, the "administration" had elected the chairmen of eighteen, and the "leaders' league" of sixteen. In three of the others the chairmanship was contested; while the fourth, being evenly divided, had failed to elect a chairman. Owing to conflicting claims, it is impossible to ascertain which side

was fairly entitled to the chairmanship of the delegations in which each claimed a majority. But it is nevertheless clear that the city committee decided contests on purely factional grounds; for not only of the three contested delegations, but also of the fourth, which both sides admitted to be evenly divided, an adherent of the "administration" was recognized as chairman and permitted to attend the meeting at which the temporary officers of the convention were chosen.*

In deciding contests between delegates, similar partiality seems to have been exhibited. Of 128 seats in dispute, "administration" delegates were admitted to 103 and their opponents to but twenty-five.† This, however, did not affect the result of the convention, since the "administration" might have given up a large majority of the contested seats without endangering its success. The only result of the arbitrary action of the city committee was to increase the majority from perhaps fifty or sixty to ninety-one.

The true explanation of "machine rule" will be found, not in the corrupt practices which are occasionally resorted to, but in the superior effectiveness of organized action. The average Philadelphian considers voting at the primary a complete fulfillment of his duty with regard to party nominations. This is a fatal delusion. The casting of a ballot is seldom sufficient to give effective expression to the citizen's political views. In the first place, he must vote for a candidate who, if elected, will faithfully represent him; otherwise participation in the primary is an empty form. As a second requisite, his candidate must be elected, which result can be accomplished only by co-operation with a large body of his fellow-citizens. Now, to secure such concerted action, work must begin long before the primary day. In short, preparation for the primary is the most important step in the process of nomination.

* *Public Ledger*, January 12, 1898, p. 1; and January 13, p. 2.

† *Philadelphia Press* and *Public Ledger*, January 12 and 13, 1898.

This truth only the professional politicians seem to understand. While practically all Republican voters manifest a willingness to attend the primaries, the main body of them entirely neglect that previous organization which is necessary to render their votes effective. Without making the slightest effort to place suitable persons in nomination for delegates, they go to the polls, accept a printed ticket from the least objectionable faction there represented, and deposit it in the ballot box. A choice is made between two or three nominees submitted to them, but rarely do we see a concerted attempt on the part of a body of disinterested voters to elect delegates who will be truly representative. The result is inevitable. The failure of the better class of citizens to take the initiative, to begin at the beginning in political action, opens the way for "machine rule." This will be evident when we have become familiar with machine methods.

After the pattern of the feudal system, the "party machine" is a hierarchy of personal dependents, each holding from a leader above him some favor which he requites by personal loyalty and support. At the top stands the "city boss." In case the organization is in perfect working order, he controls the appointment and dismissal of employes in nearly all departments of the city government, the nominal heads of departments having surrendered to him, as a condition of their own advancement, the appointing power with which they are entrusted by law. As a rule, the "city boss" exercises this authority through his lieutenants, the "ward bosses." He distributes the places to be filled among the several wards, leaving to the local "bosses" the selection of individuals. In return, the "ward boss" is expected to "deliver" the vote of his ward in nominating conventions; that is, to secure the election of delegates who will obey orders. For accomplishing this, the offices allotted to him by the "city boss" are his chief resource. They serve as rations to be doled out to his followers, when

needed, to hold them in line; but, at the same time, they bind him to his own superior by whose grace he has such favors to bestow.

Subordinate to the "ward boss," there is in each electoral division a small clique of from five to ten men, one of whom is generally recognized as the "division leader." Of these, the proverbial "ward heelers," the most active are the municipal office-holders. Ward politics is their livelihood. Their places are won and held by service to the "machine." In the eyes of the typical "heeler," to carry the primary of his division is the first duty of an office-holder. He must obey an order from the ward or division leader as promptly as one from the head of his department at the City Hall.

It is the vigilance of such groups of "workers" in hundreds of divisions that sustains the power of the "machine." They perform all the *initial* and consequently *decisive* acts in the process of nomination. On the first Tuesday in May, when no one else is thinking of politics, they meet at the polling place, as the party rules direct, and organize a division association, electing as officers either members of their own set or outsiders in sympathy with them. After the organization of the division association, its next regular meeting is held near the middle of August to select candidates for delegates, etc. to be voted for at the ensuing primary. This is the first formal step in the process of nominating candidates for the November election. It is, however, a formal step only. At a previous secret conference, the members of the clique have prepared a "slate" for the division association to ratify. On assembling for such a conference, they will naturally begin by announcing their various personal aspirations. Each usually desires to attend some convention; city conventions being especially in demand. To maintain harmony these honors must be so divided that as many of the "workers" as possible will feel satisfied.

The "slate" having been accepted by the members of the

clique, it must next be given an appearance of popular endorsement. This is accomplished by its adoption at a public meeting of the division association, in which all resident Republicans are entitled to participate, though as a matter of fact few attend except the "regulars" and their friends. When the meeting convenes, the president announces as the business in hand, the selection of candidates for the ensuing primary. Whereupon, by previous arrangement, the "slated" candidates are nominated in quick succession. As the person or persons selected for each position are named, someone moves that the nominations for that office be closed; the motion is carried by acclamation, and the nominations are ratified in the same manner. When the ticket has been completed, the meeting adjourns, having finished its work without the least deliberation or opportunity for discussion.

Their ticket having been thus formally placed in the field, the future course of the clique will be governed by circumstances. If no rival ticket is forthcoming, no further action is required, for an easy victory awaits them at the primary. While they and their friends attend and vote, most Republicans of the division will either fail to hear that a primary election is being held, or deliberately stay away, on the plea that their votes would not affect the result.

If, however, an opposing ticket is placed in the field—if there is a "fight," to use the current phrase—the members of the clique exert themselves to win votes for their candidates. Taking a "window-book," a note-book in which the assessor's list has been pasted, they go over the list of names, crossing off the members of other parties, and marking the Republicans whose sympathies are known. The remainder constitute the uncertain element which must be looked after.

The canvassing of these voters is usually conducted in a systematic manner, each of the "workers" being given a list of persons to interview. In some cases a high order of

ability is devoted to such work. A division leader, with whom the writer happens to be acquainted, makes it a practice, in assigning names to his followers, to direct them to return to him with a report of each visit. Whenever an interview is unsuccessful, he attends to the case himself, and, being very gentlemanly in demeanor, entertaining in conversation, and tactful in devising expedients to win confidence, he rarely meets with failure. As a result, the candidates whom he and his friends nominate are uniformly successful at the primary. With less skill usually, but still effectively, the same methods are used in most of the 996 other divisions, with the result that so long as harmony prevails within its own ranks, the "machine" is able to control nominations with the greatest ease.

Without organizing in a similar manner and resorting to the same methods, disinterested citizens are powerless to offer effective opposition. At every turn the isolated voter finds his way barred. At best he can only choose between two rival machine candidates, and usually this alternative is not afforded him. On reaching the polling place, he is likely to learn that the local clique, acting in harmony, has placed but one ticket in the field, which is certain to be elected with or without his support. Occasionally, however, he will find rival leaders contending for supremacy, in which case he may at least help to settle a quarrel. But, as a rule, the intelligent, conscientious citizen will be unable to see wherein either side is more deserving of support than the other. What shall he do under such circumstances? Shall he prepare a ticket of his own, putting on it the names of representative citizens? By such an expedient he will at least have the satisfaction of voting for men who command his respect, but this philosophic satisfaction will be the only reward for his pains. A ticket presented without organized support is simply a shot in the air.

Perhaps it will be said: "The disinterested Republicans

of the division should co-operate, select representative men for delegates, and actively support them at the primary. Such a body of citizens, acting in concert, could easily dislodge the henchmen of the machine." This may be conceded. But we should here observe that just as the isolated voter finds his hands tied at the primary, so an organization of such voters, acting independently, is powerless to influence party nominations, even though successful at its own primary. For unless similar bodies are organized by the same class of citizens in hundreds of other divisions, their delegates will be hopelessly out-voted in the conventions. In a word, the concerted action of citizens within the division must be supplemented by the concerted action of several hundred groups of citizens representing different divisions, before practical results can be accomplished.

It is useless to insist that the rank and file of voters should take this active part in party politics. Every candid observer must recognize that the average American of this generation is not disposed to do anything of the kind; and the reformer has no choice but to take citizens as he finds them and adjust electoral machinery to their existing habits and inclinations. To speak concretely, he must secure such a modification of the nominating system as will enable the ordinary citizen, whose time is fully occupied by commercial pursuits, to cope with the practical politician on more equal terms.

Though it is foreign to the design of this article to advocate particular measures of reform, a description of two quite different plans designed to remedy the cardinal defect of our present system may serve to place in a clearer light the essential conditions of successful reform.

A plan which merits more serious consideration from political reformers than it has yet received was devised about twenty years ago by Dr. C. C. P. Clark, of Oswego, N. Y. Observing that the results of primary elections are usually determined in advance by the action of organized

cliques, this gentleman proposed to break up such organizations by abolishing permanent primary constituencies and dividing the voters before each election into arbitrary groups small enough to meet and deliberate. As the names of all qualified electors of a ward or town were to be placed in a wheel and drawn out one at a time, the first hundred to constitute the first group, the second hundred the second, the third hundred the third, etc., it is obvious that no one could foresee to what group he would belong; which fact would render impossible that previous preparation and organization by which the henchmen of the machine are able to control the result. Aside from the abandonment of permanent constituencies, this plan, which was intended by its author to discharge the functions both of the primary and the regular elections, is quite similar to the New England caucus system.

Dr. Clark suggests that each group or constituency should assemble in strict seclusion, as the result of personal notice to each of its members, and select by majority vote an "electoral delegate." The delegates so chosen by the several constituencies of a ward are to constitute a ward convention; while the whole body of delegates elected throughout the city act as a city convention.

Though somewhat clumsy in operation, this system could hardly fail, if properly carried out, to accomplish the end in view, namely: the elimination of "machine rule." Such, at any rate, was the opinion expressed a few years ago by one of the leading "machine" politicians of western New York. During the session of 1892, a bill providing for the election of city officials in Oswego by Dr. Clark's plan passed the New York Assembly, but was defeated in the Senate through the influence of Lieutenant-Governor Sheehan, who, in explanation of his course, candidly remarked: "If Oswego got such a system of elections other cities might want it, and then what would become of us fellows?"*

**Vide* Address of Dr. C. C. P. Clark at the "Cleveland Conference for Good City Government."

Another plan for minimizing the influence of "machine" methods, endorsed by many practical reformers, is proportional representation; a system which is being tried in the election of legislative bodies in Denmark, Switzerland and other countries, with results that seem to justify the anticipations of its supporters. Although several devices, differing radically as to method of operation have been placed before the public, one essential feature is common to all—each party or group of voters is given representation proportional to the vote it casts. This involves, in all cases, the abandonment of the single member district and the adoption of the "general ticket."

The Swiss system, known as the "free list," has been selected by the American Proportional Representation League, as best suited to American conditions; and has been formulated in a bill designed especially for the elections of city councils.* Under this bill any party or group of voters equal to one per cent of the vote cast at the last election may place a list of candidates on the official ballot. Inasmuch as the principal fact to be ascertained from the returns is the relative numerical strength of different parties, as a basis for determining the number of members to which each is entitled, the voting is primarily for tickets rather than for candidates. The elector casts as many votes as there are members to be elected; marking his ballot in either of three ways. (1) He may place crosses opposite the required number of names, selecting from any tickets on the ballot; in which case each party receives as many votes as there are names marked in its column. (2) If the elector exhaust his individual preferences before using all his votes, he may cast the remainder for the party of his choice without regard to candidates, by marking in a circle at the head of the column. (3) He may cast his full vote for a party, disregarding individual candidates altogether.

The election board, in canvassing the returns, ascertain

* "The Proportional Representation Review," December, 1895.

first the total vote cast, and next the number of votes cast for each ticket. After this the representation to which the several parties are entitled is determined by the rule of three. Thus, taking a case in which twenty members are to be elected, the returns might show the following result:

	Vote.	Members.
Republican	36,481	8
Democratic	19,358	4
Peoples	6,942	2
Independent	28,463	6
	<hr/>	<hr/>
	91,244	20

The representation of the various parties having been ascertained, the candidates on each ticket, up to the required number, who have received the most individual votes are declared elected. For example, assuming the Independent vote in the foregoing instance to be divided as follows, certificates of election would be issued to A, B, C, E, F, and H.

Ticket votes	$1,000 \times 20 = 20,000$
Individual votes, A	1,141
“ “ B	968
“ “ C	914
“ “ D	682
“ “ E	834
“ “ F	893
“ “ G	635
“ “ H	1,164
“ “ I	450
“ “ J	782
	<hr/>
	28,463

The great advantage of proportional representation is not, as many suppose, a mere matter of equity between parties, but the fact that it gives to every citizen, whether acting with a strong or a weak organization, his share of influence in deciding the result of an election; and thus enables

him to make a free choice of parties and candidates, unhampered by the fear of wasting his vote.

To illustrate the results which would follow the application of proportional representation in the election of party conventions, suppose that instead of assigning one delegate to each electoral division, we elect, say twenty, from the ward or, preferably, from a still larger district, by the Swiss system. As an immediate consequence, the enlightened citizens, who now persistently but unavailingly oppose the "machine," would be able with the greatest ease to elect perhaps twenty-five per cent of the delegates. This alone would be no small gain. But far more important would be the effect upon the mass of citizens who at present acquiesce in "machine" supremacy regarding it as inevitable. Under the existing single-member district system, the average voter goes to the primary with full knowledge that the real contest lies between two candidates, both representing the professional politician element and that votes cast for other and better candidates will be thrown away. Therefore, consistently with the practical turn of mind of the average American, instead of holding out for something perfectly satisfactory, he makes the best of opportunities actually presented, by supporting the least objectionable of the two leading candidates.

With proportional representation, on the other hand, the voter would have no reason to limit his choice to the leading candidates. Inasmuch as every group numbering five per cent of the party (assuming that twenty members are to be elected) would return at least one delegate, he could usually support any ticket on the ballot with an equal chance of his vote affecting the result. For example, take a district in which the party polls 20,000 votes. Each member, being one of 20,000, would be entitled to one twenty-thousandth of the electoral power; which is the precise amount of influence he would exert, whether he were one of 1,000 voters who return one delegate, one of 10,000 who elect ten, or

one of 20,000 electing the entire delegation. In other words, as the voter can at best contribute but a thousandth part toward the election of one delegate, he accomplishes as much by assisting a small organization to elect a single member, as by aiding a larger body to increase its representation from 10 to 11 or from 15 to 16.

The adoption of such a system would free the voter from all temptation to make a choice of evils ; and enable him, without trouble or inconvenience, to assist in electing delegates of his own choice. Any group numbering one per cent of the party would be allowed to place a ticket in the field ; and as one-twentieth of the vote cast would insure the election of a delegate this privilege would be freely exercised by all classes. On the official primary ballots there would appear along with the "machine" nominees, lists of respected citizens, representing from various points of view, the interests of the municipality ; and the voter, no longer finding it necessary to suppress his personal convictions for the sake of practical results, would, we may safely predict, select the ticket in which he felt most confidence. A convention so elected would consist, not of creatures of the "machine," but of deliberately chosen representatives of all classes of the party.

It is not to be inferred that either of the foregoing plans would at once make a perfect nominating system. Nor is it probable that any ready-made device will be found to meet all the requirements of the situation. Perfection is attainable, if at all, only by gradual improvement based on experience. As Mr. Edison was able to perfect his phonograph only by successive experiments, each followed by changes and modifications ; so in the development of political institutions we must usually be content to take one step at a time. "By a slow but well sustained progress, the effect of each step is watched ; the good or ill success of the first gives light to us in the second ; and so, from light to light, we are conducted with safety through the whole series.

We see that the parts of the system do not clash. The evils, latent in the most promising contrivances, are provided for as they arise. One advantage is as little as possible sacrificed to another.”*

But while theoretical devices are of uncertain value until tested by experience, they must, nevertheless, be resorted to at every step in advance. As the mechanical inventor in perfecting his machine is obliged to form a theory in explanation of its defects, and make such modifications as his knowledge of natural forces suggests; so political machinery can be perfected only by testing devices and systems, which, in the light of our limited knowledge of social forces, seem adapted to the situation. Our greatest need is intelligently directed experiments. Accordingly, primary reformers should grasp every opportunity to make a practical test, preferably on a small scale, of plans which, like that of Dr. Clark, and proportional representation, seem likely to place the ordinary citizen on a footing of equality with the practical politician. When the American people decide to approach the nominating problem in the same spirit with which they meet scientific, industrial and commercial problems, the prevailing idea that the supremacy of a corrupt minority is inevitable will be quickly dispelled.

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* “Burke's Works,” Vol. iii, p. 456.